

# The Democratic Core: *How Large, How Effective?*

**W**here is global democratization headed? How effective will be the core of Western democracies at handling common security problems? Democratization remains a key goal and a viable enterprise. However, promoting it will not be easy and will require careful handling.

Those countries with a democratic government are the world's "democratic core." Enlarging it has been a goal of U.S. foreign policy in recent years. This is not new, for presidents as far back as George Washington have encouraged the spread of democracy. What is new is that it has seemingly become a feasible goal after communism's decline and the Cold War's end. Today, U.S. policymakers believe that enlarging the democratic community can expand international cooperation while reducing instability abroad.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a monumental struggle between democracy and various forms of totalitarianism. Democracy emerged triumphant, exposing totalitarianism as a hollow ideology. Totalitarianism denied human rights, failed to produce economic prosperity, and fostered war. Conversely, democracy championed human rights,

produced growing economic prosperity, and fostered peace. In the Cold War's aftermath, optimism flourished regarding democracy's global prospects. Emerging trends reinforced this optimism. Former Warsaw Pact countries pledged to adopt Western values, including democracy and market economies. The 1980s witnessed democracy's spread in Asia, Latin America, and, to a degree, Sub-Saharan Africa. Only Cuba, the Middle East, and Communist China seemed to be hold-outs, although some observers saw China as adopting market economics and becoming more pluralist.

More recently this optimism has dimmed. Democracy remains intact in many places, but many democratic countries are not necessarily secure, and the international system is not stable. Democracy's progress has slowed, especially in Russia and Eurasia. Some democracies' domestic and foreign policies have shown signs of being illiberal. With the global economy's slowdown, many worry that democracy's appeal might diminish in countries struggling to create a viable economic order. Some areas remain turbulent and dangerous, especially those where democracy is showing no serious signs of development.

This chapter takes stock of democracy's future, examining where democracy is firmly entrenched, where it is struggling to develop, and

where it is not progressing. It also considers a key issue: will the core Western democracies cooperate on common security interests? Will they combine their strengths, or dissipate their energies? The answer will heavily influence how they deal with the world's future turbulence.

A balanced perspective is required. Democracy's pursuit must be guided by both idealism and realism. The challenge ahead will be to consolidate new democracies while encouraging the adoption of democracy elsewhere as conditions permit. Equally important, the current democratic community must deal with new security dangers. It will require effective U.S. and allied policies, supported by cooperative diplomacy and diligent efforts to build new capabilities.

### Eastern Europe: Democratization Success Story

Recently, democracy's biggest success story has been in Eastern Europe. Little more than a decade ago, the countries there were all led by Communist governments. The revolutions of the late 1980s not only toppled Communist rule and dissolved the Warsaw Pact but also led to the widespread adoption of democratic governments and market economies. The transition has not been easy, but for the most part it has been successful.

Today, democracy reigns in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria, plus the three Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Elsewhere, democracy has been partly adopted in Slovakia, Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Prospects for further progress in building democratic institutions and creating prosperous market economies are good.

Nearly all these countries have been seeking integration in Western institutions. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined NATO in early 1999. Nine others have applied to join NATO. All these countries, plus many others, participate in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PFP) programs. Several have applied for European Union (EU) membership and may join in the coming years. While serious problems persist in the Balkans, Europe seems well on the way toward full democratization and integration by 2010.

## Key Trends

Several trends are affecting democracy and the democratic core. Some trends favor democracy's spread, others slow it and dissipate its integrative and peace-enhancing effects. Some trends encourage cooperation among Western democracies, others dampen it. These trends indicate that the prospects for enlarging the democratic core are still alive, but also that some constraints exist.

Analysis of trends requires defining "democracy." The simple definition is that it is

government by the people, for the people. Many political scientists have a more elaborate definition. To them, democracy is a representative form of government, anchored in rule by all citizens. A "market democracy" has these political features plus an open economy based on private property, profit seeking, and capitalism. Democracy's four components are as follows:

- Public election of officials, through multiparty competition and ballots
- Government decisionmaking based on a division of powers
- Constitutional protection of individual rights and the rule of law
- Policies that focus on the common good.

This definition means that democracy can have different forms. The United States has one type, Britain another, and Japan yet a third. It also means that while democracy has its origins in Western values, it can rest on other values. The U.S. division of powers reflects Madisonian values in the U.S. culture, but they are not universally required. Democracy can flourish in a Christian society, but also in other cultures. Different values and experiences result in alternative approaches to distributing power and organizing society, as long as democracy's basic conditions exist.

This definition leaves wide latitude for a country's economic order. In the West, democracy typically is coupled with a market economy, but in many places, considerable state ownership exists. Indeed, democracy need not preside over an industrial economy. An agrarian democracy is also possible.

Democracy can also come in degrees. Some countries can be more democratic than others. The United States and Western Europe have fully developed market democracies. Some countries have emerging market democracies. Although democratic and capitalist in name, their transition is incomplete. Vestiges of traditional or authoritarian rule remain, and their market economies are still unstable. Democracy has a broad as well as a meaningful definition.

Democracy's spread beyond the developed world began after the Second World War and the end of colonialism. It accelerated during the 1980s and early 1990s after the Cold War. Democracy is no longer an exception to the rule; rather, it is becoming the rule. The annual Freedom House survey, *Freedom in the World*, classifies 117 of 191 independent countries in the world as

## Electoral Democracies Scorecard by Region

Region	Free Democracies	Partly Free Democracies
Western Hemisphere	25	8
Europe	28	8
Former Soviet Union	4	4
Greater Middle East and South Asia	1	6
Africa	9	7
Asia and Pacific	14	3

Source: *Freedom in the World* (Washington: Freedom House, 1998).

“electoral democracies,” because their leaders are chosen in free elections.<sup>1</sup> When considering the four components previously described, the number declines. Writer Fareed Zakaria states that if respect for law and human rights is included, the number could drop by one-half.<sup>2</sup> Today, about 70 percent of the democracies are located in the Western Hemisphere, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific. Democracy is less common in the former Soviet Union, the Greater Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

The democratic nations can be divided into two groups. The first is the “inner core,” which includes the United States, its NATO allies, and key Asian partners like Japan, South Korea, and Australia, plus a few others. This group encompasses about 30 countries and is bonded by security and economic ties. The second and larger group, the “outer core,” has a mixture of full and partial democracies. It includes most Latin American countries, the democratizing countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, several Sub-Saharan countries, several Asian countries, and a few Greater Middle East and South Asia countries. This second group does not have close ties among themselves or with the inner core. The difference between this inner core and outer core is key to evaluating democracy’s progress.

## Thriving and Cooperating Democratic Core

The Cold War’s end a decade ago greatly transformed the strategic situation of the core democratic countries for the better. Before, their

democratic values were under ideological attack. While the borders of some were directly threatened, the nuclear standoff with the Soviet bloc threatened the survival of all. Imposing security burdens mandated large defense budgets.

The Cold War’s end eliminated most threats and greatly lessened security burdens. The victory in the Persian Gulf War secured, at least temporarily, their access to oil supplies. Since then, democratic values have gained broader appeal, economies have prospered, societies have become more stable, and cooperative ties have become stronger. In Europe, multilateral institutions, such as NATO and the EU, are deepening internally and enlarging eastward. In Asia, bilateral ties between the United States and key countries have held the region together, but multilateral economic cooperation is gaining momentum.

Why does this Western community continue to coalesce and expand, even after the Soviet threat is gone? Earlier political theories suggested that alliances disintegrate after external threats vanish, because members no longer have an incentive to continue to cooperate, particularly if cooperation constrains their sovereignty. Since the Cold War ended, these theories have been rebutted. The Western community is demonstrating that it does not need an external threat to sustain it. Its shared interests are reason enough for it to continue, prosper, and enlarge.

This tight community’s bonds make war among its members almost inconceivable. Multilateral cooperation has become more attractive, because it enhances interests and allays fears. For example, France has no reason to fear that in some areas of cooperation, Germany will gain a strategic advantage. Conversely, Germany need not fear France’s relative gains in some areas. By eliminating concerns, this community has knocked down imposing barriers to cooperation and provided the opportunity for multilateral ventures that serve all members’ interests.

Even in tranquil times, multilateral security cooperation makes sense. NATO enables its members to meet peacetime defense needs at significantly lower cost than otherwise would be the case. It also ensures they are prepared for crises.

Economically, an open market is the best means of promoting the prosperity of all countries. Multilateral cooperation is needed to reduce trade barriers and promote common policies regarding financial affairs, monetary relations, and technology transfers in the information age. As a result, current members want to sustain the community, while outside countries seek admission.

The democratic core's future appears bright. Cooperation is more likely, not less, especially in Europe, as NATO and the EU grow larger and stronger. Yet the future is not entirely bright. In several regions outside its enlarging boundaries, the Western community faces turbulence and potential dangers. This community has powerful incentives to cooperate in meeting the security and economic problems ahead. The capacity of its members to forge this kind of cooperation, however, is uncertain.

## Market Democracy's Growth

Only about one-half of the world is democratic. The rest is undemocratic or even anti-democracy and more prone to turbulence and war. Especially outside the Western Alliance system, democracy is no certain guarantor of integrative policies or peace. This holds true where democracies border authoritarian countries. It also can be the case when democracies border each other and lack trust and respect for each other's interests. In today's world, some democracies may be in one or both situations.

Although democracy defines a country's internal order, it does not mandate any type of external conduct. Generally, democratic values influence foreign policy in an important way. A

country that safeguards its own citizens' human rights has reasons to respect its neighbors' legitimate interests and international law. Nonetheless, most nation-states pursue their individual interests on the global scene. These interests can reflect democratic values. They also can be influenced by classic geostrategic aims, like secure borders, profitable foreign trade, access to resources, control of assets, weak rivals, and stable nearby regions. Respect for democratic values can stop at the border, if a country is consumed by nationalism, distrusts its neighbors, or otherwise is insensitive to the neighbors' legitimate interests.

What democracy guarantees is that foreign policy will be made through pluralist procedures. It does not dictate a specific foreign policy. For democracies, as for other political systems, foreign policy is a variable, not a constant.

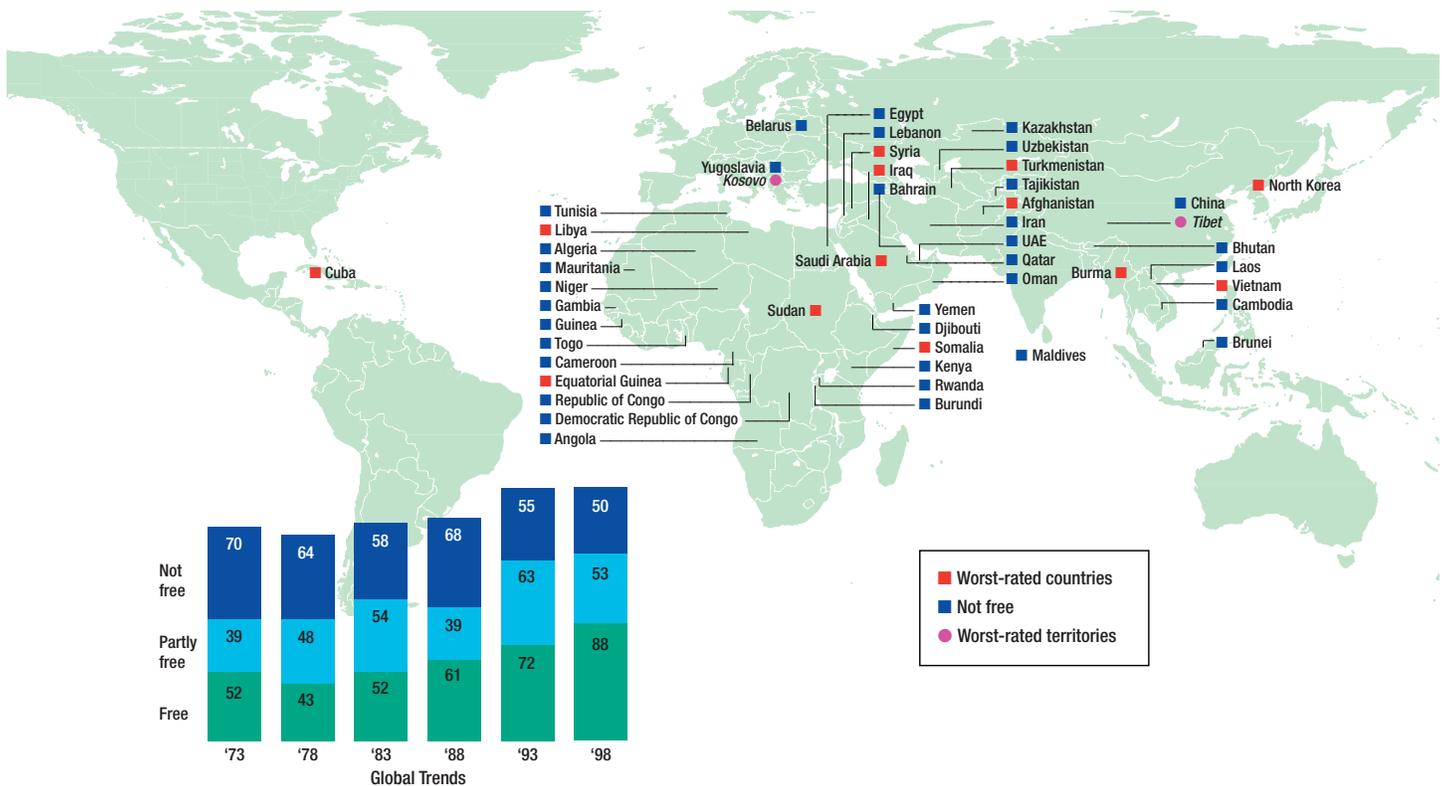
Democracies undeniably are capable of conducting strong foreign policies. This is especially true for wealthy democracies that can marshal large resources. Democratic policies are also marked by widespread agreement among society and government. When a consensus emerges regarding a foreign policy issue, democracies can

**Pro-democracy and labor activists marching through the streets of Hong Kong**



AP/Wide World Photos

Countries Rated by Level of Political Freedom



Source: *Freedom in the World* (Washington: Freedom House, 1998) *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1999.

act with great strength, because they can mobilize widespread support from within society and the government. As a result, democracies have proven themselves effective in pursuing peace and also waging war. Within a democracy, checks and balances also help prevent the adoption of policies on the basis of whim, or the views of a few. Public opinion can restrain the government's impulse. Similarly, government can restrain the public's impulses. Within government, competing political parties can prevent bipartisan support and dampen policies.

Like human beings, democracies seem to pass through stages in life—infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and eventually maturity. In their early stages, democracies may act in boisterous and immature ways toward their citizens and their neighbors. In this stage, immoderate nationalism, democratic imperialism, and even militarism have been common, if only temporary. Many new democracies today may be prone to such conduct, especially in troubled regions. The North Atlantic countries are old democracies, generally content with life, settled in their ways, and moderate in foreign policies.

Recent experience suggests that Western democracies pursue peaceful foreign policies and do not wage war against each other. They often cooperate in taming the anarchy of the nation-state system. While this is true, it masks a darker history. In the two centuries since democracy appeared, many of its practitioners pursued bullying foreign policies that were animated by nationalism, imperialism, or simply the raw-boned pursuit of state interests. Democracies may not have gone to war with each other, but they often came close. They were restrained more by traditional diplomacy than by popular passions and respect for each other's democratic values.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain's relations with France and the United States were tense, even though all three countries were democracies. The American Civil War is a powerful example of how war can occur in democracy over disputes about constitutional law, regional power relationships, and civil rights. Across Europe, the gradual spread of democracy did not

stop the continent from sliding into competitive geopolitics and an unstable balance of power. When World War I erupted in 1914, Britain and France allied with Russia, a rigid traditional monarchy, against Germany, a constitutional monarchy that was gradually becoming democratic. Democracies can treat each other in tough-minded ways, and their conduct can be influenced by the prevailing geostrategic order.

The big breakthrough in integration and peace enhancement came when totalitarianism became a threat. World War II compelled Western democracies to create a global alliance to defeat nazism and fascism. In the Cold War, the threat of Communist aggression led the United States to develop a close transatlantic bond with Western Europe, and European powers overcame their differences with each other. Britain, France, and Germany became close allies. In Asia, the United States similarly allied with Japan and South Korea. What began as a necessary marriage of convenience flowered into the powerful, cooperative Western community that exists today.

Elsewhere, such interstate bonds are not well developed. Consequently, some transition states seeking democracy show little enthusiasm for actively joining the U.S.-led Western community. Russia, China, and India are examples. All three are big powers in pursuit of state interests. All three seek limited cooperation with the Western inner core. They believe that fully integrated membership would not serve their interests. Accordingly, they choose to remain outside and pursue their interests and to oppose U.S. and Western policies when it suits their purposes.

Other countries, including democracies, may behave in similar ways. Some new democracies may join the chorus of complaints against alleged U.S. hegemony. Others may view the Western Alliance and economic system suspiciously. Still others may see few practical advantages in joining the community. A few may have ambitious agendas that cause them to keep their distance in order not to be restrained by the Western powers. The overall effect could be that many new democracies choose to keep the United States and the democratic inner core at arm's length. This development may not prevent democratization, but it could weaken progress toward greater integration and cooperation among democratic countries. If so, democratic

integration may continue in the North Atlantic and Europe, and less so in Asia, but it will not be the model for the rest of the world.

A lack of integration does not mean that all these regions are destined for perpetual conflict. Some regions may preserve peaceful conditions, even if they do not make great strides toward integration. This might be the case in Asia, where collective thinking is the exception rather than the rule. Some regions might not be so fortunate. In South Asia, for example, India and Pakistan are both democracies, yet they are mired in a deep political conflict that has led to dangerous nuclear proliferation. The two governments distrust each other because their state interests are in conflict. Their case is not unique. It illustrates that, if neighboring countries distrust each other, they can become involved in a serious confrontation, even if they are democracies.

Democratization is unlikely to solve the principal threat to peace—regional rogues willing to use force, including weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Today's rogue states are firmly authoritarian and are unlikely to become democracies soon. The same is true for countries that could become rogue states. Some new democracies could become so nationalistic that they become rogues. Nonetheless, further democratization will likely reduce the number of potential rogues. Yet, the number of nondemocratic states will remain large enough to ensure that the potential for other rogues remains high.

Democratic enlargement and integration are not a cure for all the world's troubles, but they do help narrow those troubles and make them more manageable. Democracy's spread increases the prospects for integration and peace. It creates common political values, respect for international law, and a spirit of cooperation. What ensures peace among countries is a long legacy of reassuring relations with respect for mutual interests and beneficial reciprocity.

## Market Democracy's Spread

Harvard scholar Samuel P. Huntington's 1991 book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, celebrated democracy's steady expansion into new regions over the two previous decades. Huntington forecasted a bright future for democracy. He was not alone. At the time, many observers concluded that communism's collapse seemed to open the door for market democracy's spread.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, Huntington published *The Clash of Civilizations*, a pessimistic article that

forecasted confrontation between Western democracies and other cultures in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Asia.<sup>4</sup> Again, this change is not unique; it reflects many observers' increasing pessimism. What happened, and why? Are market democracy and the West losing their appeal?

A balanced appraisal is needed. The earlier optimism was exaggerated. It reflected a triumphant Western attitude that was not justified with still existing barriers to democracy, pro-Western attitudes, and cooperative conduct. The current pessimism reflects awareness of these barriers, but it could be overstated. Market democracy is expanding, but more slowly than hoped. Its success is not predestined, nor is it even a viable near-term choice in some places.

The emerging trends for market democracy vary from one region to the next. In Europe, market democracy is in full flower and expanding steadily in most places. As discussed above, the West European countries are healthy market democracies, and most of them are full-fledged members of the inner Western core. In Eastern Europe, market democracy continues its steady enlargement. Most countries have made considerable progress in adopting markets and democratic governments, and, even though problems are being encountered and some reversals experienced, several are preparing to join NATO and/or the EU, as well as other Western institutions. The only exception to this positive trend is the Balkans, where ethnic conflict continues to consume the former Yugoslavia. Yet even there, Slovenia has become a pro-Western market democracy, Bulgaria is moving toward this goal, and even Albania and Macedonia have applied to join NATO.

In Asia, market democracy has also made progress in recent years. In the past, several Asian countries chose the alleged "Asian model" to progress, whereby a corporatist or even authoritarian government presided over creation of market capitalism and only later allowed for democracy to be adopted—after economic prosperity was first achieved. Regardless of the wisdom of this approach, it seemingly has run its course in many places. Japan, with its prosperous market economy, has moved from one-party corporatist politics to a more pluralist order. South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines have adopted more pluralist democracies with market economies. Other Southeast Asian countries are moving in this direction.

In several other regions, market democracy continues to make progress. In Latin America, most countries continue to be market democracies, even though some backsliding has occurred recently. Even Cuba might fall into the democratic camp once Castro passes from the scene. In South Asia, market democracy is the model, even though the countries there have serious problems with their economies, societies, and interstate relations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, democratic progress is being made in several key countries, although the overall trends are checkered across this vast continent of many different nations.

Where are the major exceptions to this positive trend? One partial exception, in the form of a worrisome question mark, is Russia and Eurasia. Russia is encountering big trouble in making the transition from a socialist economy to a market economy. Yet, its government is a democracy, or at least a quasi-democracy. It has a constitutionally ultrastrong presidency, a weak parliament, few organized political parties, powerful special interests, and an alienated society—all worrisome features. But it continues to hold elections that are taken seriously—a good sign. Its future political trends are uncertain because democracy was adopted quickly, at a turbulent time, leaving it vulnerable to the charge that it is responsible for the country's severe economic troubles. Yet, its fledgling democracy continues to function, or at least to exist, and seemingly there is no widespread consensus in favor of restored totalitarianism. The same applies to Ukraine, whose independence and evolution are also key to the West.

Elsewhere in the former Soviet strategic space, the future of market economies and democratic governments is uncertain across Central Asia and the Caucasus. The recent trend back toward authoritarianism, however, does not ensure that the cause is permanently lost. Much will depend upon whether these countries can establish their identities, invigorate their economies, and settle their social troubles. To the extent they succeed, democracy will be on firmer footing there; if success is elusive, trouble lies ahead. For the most part, however, these countries are not centrally important to the stability of the international security system or to vital Western interests.

A big exception to democratic enlargement is China, which is making strides toward adopting a market economy, or at least an economy with more capitalism and less state ownership. Although its ruling Communist party seemingly is becoming more diverse, it is not making parallel strides toward democracy or even major political

pluralism. Another big exception is the vast region encompassing the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Apart from Israel and Turkey, this region has few democracies and few prosperous market economies. Many of its governments reflect Islamic traditionalism, several are authoritarian, and some are run by dictators. Islamic fundamentalist values are gaining ground in several places. If this trend gains strength, it is more likely to produce populist theocracies than democracies.

Market democracy has an enduring appeal. It safeguards human liberties and enables economic prosperity. No other political-economic system offers the same promise. The possibility is low that a worldwide rival ideology will emerge to seriously oppose market democracy. Its competitors are likely to be local and diverse, rather than global and singular, and are unlikely to be effective in precluding market democracy in the future.

Market democracy's expansion has slowed in recent years, but this was inevitable. The easy victories have already been made. Expansion in many countries will be more difficult, because the conditions for market democracy do not exist there. Whether these countries ultimately become market democracies remains to be seen, but the lack of rapid progress does not mean that market democracy is losing ground or even advancing less rapidly than should reasonably be expected. Its gains are likely to hold, and it will likely progress slowly in difficult regions.

## Market Democracy in a Good and Bad Global Economy

The booming world economy appears to have contributed to democracy's spread in recent years. Prosperity and wealth presumably enhance the appetite for democracy and clear the political path for its adoption. If so, concern arises when the world economy turns downward, which has occurred with the Asian economic crisis. Does such a downturn spell doom for democracy's current and future gains?

The main reasons for adopting democracy are individual freedom, civil rights, and representative government. Provided these are the reasons for adopting democracy, it should not collapse in its new locations because economic times are troubled. Democracy took root in the United States and Europe before the age of industrialization, urbanization, and capitalist corporations.

What produces economic prosperity is free-market capitalism. Democracy enables capitalism to flourish, and successful market capitalism helps create the social and economic conditions that allow democracy to take permanent root.

Democracy is unlikely to be scuttled because it fails to manage the business cycle, but its abandonment might be deemed sensible if the reliable consequence of losing human rights results in better economic conditions. However, the economic record of authoritarian governments has been dreadful. Because of their quest for centralized power, they have been unwilling to promote the human freedoms, private property, and profit motives that enable capitalism to come to life. Societies are unlikely to choose a proven economic and political loser over an imperfect but promising political system like democracy.

Most democracies of the Western core are well entrenched. Their political systems have scarcely been affected by the economic downturn this past year. While some parties are rising and others are falling, this is democracy at work, not its elimination. The new democracies with sound institutions are seemingly weathering the storm. Examples include South Korea and Taiwan. In other countries, the principal remedy for dealing with sluggish economies has been elimination of corrupt political support for vested interests, flawed banking, disastrous finances, bad real estate speculation, and other practices more characteristic of authoritarian rule than democracy—examples are Indonesia and Thailand. In many places, the ultimate result of the global economic downturn may be more democracy and better market capitalism, not less.

Global prospects are not uniformly reassuring. Democracy faces trouble in some places, if economic trends deteriorate further. This especially is the case in Russia, Ukraine, and elsewhere in Eurasia, where democracy was quickly adopted amidst revolutionary upheaval. However, after free-market shock therapy initially was pursued, a catastrophic loss of the gross national product (GNP) occurred. This happened in democracy's early stages, leaving many citizens likely to conclude that they were better off economically under communism, even though they had fewer liberties. The recent global downturn exacerbated this situation, just when some of these countries seemed to be slowly recovering.

Democracy is being blamed for the ongoing economic turmoil, especially by those who want authoritarianism reinstated. Rationally speaking, free-market reforms may slow, but any restoration of authoritarianism and state-run economies



AP/Wide World Photos

**Democracy City in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where the return of democracy has not improved living standards as much as anticipated**

seems unlikely. However, inside political maneuvering is occurring at a time of mounting public worry, confusion, and ignorance. Plausibly democracy could become a casualty, although maybe not a fatality. Only time will tell. The global economic downturn endangers democracy in these countries and could affect parts of Asia.

Elsewhere the current economic downturn seems unlikely to greatly damage market democracy and could even help in some places. If the world economy rebounds, market democracy

likely will emerge just as strong as before, or even stronger. This will be the case only if the current downturn is nothing more than a mild overall recession. The real threat to democracy is a lasting global depression, such as in the 1930s, when it triggered mass anger and hysteria in many countries. The result was a number of irrational responses that deepened the depression, created major social strife, and called into question the established political order. Democracy held firm in the United States and Britain, but it was replaced by fascism and nazism in Italy and Germany. Elsewhere, communism threatened to overthrow democracy. The consequence was World War II. Although antidemocratic political extremism is not the inevitable byproduct of a depression, it can result from it in devastating ways.

## Market Democracy's Challenges

Promoting market democracy faces two difficulties. First, it may not work everywhere, at least now. Second, it might not produce the near-term liberalization commonly associated with the democratic core. These difficulties exist in many places. Over the long term, these difficulties may gradually be brought under control.

Democracy may not work if it cannot maintain national defense, public order, and a viable economy. Slowing democracy's transition may be adopted in some places, until it can manage these basic survival functions without becoming overloaded. The realization that democracy might not be highly effective everywhere is not surprising when considering the daunting requirements facing it. This is especially the case for countries trying to adopt democracy in the face of deep social conflicts and troubled economies. In Russia and Eurasia, new democracies are being asked to perform functions and produce miracles that may not be possible.

Democracy was created to protect human liberties, not to engage in social and economic engineering. In the United States, it was designed to limit government, thereby allowing social decisions to be made by the people, and economic decisions to be made by the marketplace. Essentially, it was set up to prevent a few leaders from gathering too much power, and fashioning society and the economy without the consent of the governed. Fifty years ago, democracy was seen as being weak at engineering, while communism was regarded as a better model because of its central control mechanisms. Today, democracy has a reputation for economic genius, while

communism has been judged a failure. Consequently, new democracies have been saddled with high expectations as they confront the formidable job of cleaning up communism and socialism's wasteland. Whether they succeed remains to be seen. The problem, however, lies with the wasteland, not democracy's failings.

In some countries, the conditions needed for democracy's evolution are almost wholly lacking. Much of Eurasia was ruled by the Russian czar for a reason. A strong authoritarian regime was needed to control the region's deep social differences and violent proclivities. The consequence was the loss not only of civil liberties, but economic dynamism when the industrial age began. The U.S. and West European historical experience was decidedly different. The American and European democracies grew from the bottom up. Also, they inherited civil societies and productive economies when they were born. Favorable conditions allowed these democracies to mature in a gradual fashion that paralleled the ongoing evolution of their societies and economies. As a result, democracy's pluralist mechanisms and penchant for incremental policies resulted in healthy societies, vibrant economies, and strong democracies.

Democracy has been successfully imposed from the top down only twice—in Germany and Japan after World War II. Both, however, had integrated societies and well-functioning economies. These features, plus massive outside assistance from the United States, helped democracy succeed.

Today's new Eurasian democracies also have been imposed from the top. They are expected to achieve the same successes that the Germans and Japanese did, but without the underlying prerequisites. Even as democratic institutions are being built, they are being asked to guide social and economic revolutions under conditions whose outcome is unclear.

These new democracies have faltered, at least temporarily. Parliamentary rule created so many barriers to decisive political choice that sweeping economic reforms became impossible. Some accompanying economic failures were the result of either a failure to reform or unwise reforms, while others were inherent in the situation. However, democracy was blemished. The absence of political parties amidst deep social cleavages made it unlikely that democratic mechanisms could be mobilized and disciplined to deal with the deteriorating situation. As a result, a shift back toward central control and authoritarian practices has occurred.

Such situations have raised questions about not only whether democracy will survive in these countries, but whether it should. The answer was perhaps best stated by Winston Churchill: democracy is the worst form of government except for all others. In Eurasia and other places, democracy may be stumbling in economic and social engineering, but it is gradually succeeding in its core functions—protecting liberty and promoting elections. It clearly is doing a better job than previous authoritarian governments, which denied human rights. If authoritarianism returned, it would largely eliminate these rights. Whether its economic management would be better is far from clear. It might consolidate recent changes, but it likely would be hard pressed to carry out the further economic reforms needed for market capitalism to succeed. If retrenchment occurs, one hopes it will be temporary and for the purpose of performing necessary managerial functions, while allowing democracy to continue laying its foundation. The judgment that democracy may not work everywhere in the near term does not mean that authoritarianism can work in the long term. If these countries are to prosper, building a market democracy remains their best alternative.

The illiberal democracy phenomenon may also be the result of its environment. An "illiberal democracy" is a new democracy that creates electoral mechanisms for popular choice of government officials, but fails to protect human rights through a constitution and laws. As a result, a majority is able to elect officials that can abuse the rights of minorities. Many new democracies in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eurasia reflect this trend. In some, such illiberal behavior may be increasing. The plausible explanation is that illiberalism previously existed in these countries, only now it is being conducted under the mantle of democracy, not authoritarianism.

Illiberal democracies have appeared because of the unusual way they evolved. In the United States and Europe, constitutions and laws protecting liberties were established before democracy, with its electoral procedures, was created. The result was that when democratic elections were held, elected officials were legally constrained from abusing minorities and otherwise behaving improperly. By contrast, some illiberal democracies created electoral mechanisms before



AP/Wide World Photos

**Statue of the infamous Soviet secret police chief Felix Dzerzhinsky, which was toppled by pro-democracy demonstrators in 1991, and restored by the Communist-dominated Russian parliament in 1998**

their constitution and laws evolved. The result is that majorities with uncivil motives engage in brutal conduct and elect officials to do their bidding. Consequently, democracy is becoming blemished there.

In reality, these countries are not true democracies. In the West, democracy means more than elections. It also means constitutions and laws. Illiberal states, at best, are partial democracies. They lack one of democracy's central characteristics—they must protect the people, in order to be "for the people." The key question is whether these partial democracies will evolve toward real democracy. The outcome is uncertain and will vary with each country.

Ideally, democracy's adoption should be planned carefully and implemented slowly. Such transition in government is best not attempted when the economy and society are already being refashioned. Likewise, democracy's innocence is best preserved if it is introduced only in countries where humanitarian values already exist.

Contemporary affairs are not producing such conditions. Democracy's widespread adoption is occurring at a time of great upheaval and in places where liberal social values do not exist. As a consequence, some emerging democracies may falter and backslide, and others will be questioned regarding their viability. As a result, prospects for democracy's future in these places will be mixed. However, democracy's long-term appeal will remain. Some local setbacks for democracy may occur, but a global, enduring reversal is unlikely.

## The Democratic Core: Common Interests

The inner core possesses huge resources. From secure positions, it has the capacity to look outward and act decisively in common ways. The problem is that it has not been especially skillful in doing so. Many of its European and Asian members do not want to accept new responsibilities. Consequently, the United States has more burdens than it should fairly carry and more tasks than it can realistically perform.

This judgment does not deny the democratic core's ongoing cooperative efforts in many areas. In Europe, the EU and NATO are not only enlarging but also deepening their multilateral activities. Globally, the inner core is working together to confront new challenges, from currency turmoil to transnational threats such as terrorism and drug trade. Global cooperation is taking place on the environmental agenda developed by the Rio Summit, in efforts by the G-7, the World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on new rules for international trade and investment, and in key arms control agreements to control nuclear proliferation as well as chemical and biological weapons. Likewise, regional economic bodies have emerged in recent years, including the Southern Cone Common Market and the Andean Pact in South America, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization. Cooperation in UN-sponsored activities, such as the World Health Organization, is another indicator of how the democratic core is responding to the challenge of globalization in integrative ways.

Multilateral cooperation in the defense and security realm, however, is more checkered. Existing alliances in Europe and Asia remain quite capable of protecting traditional borders, but they have not yet been realigned to deal with new threats to common interests outside those borders. In Europe, NATO has recognized the need to adapt in these ways, but its progress is slow, currently focused on Europe's periphery and measured in limited steps taken over several years. In Asia, progress is slower yet, even though the U.S.-Japanese relationship is beginning to change. Globally, the risk is that these adaptations will not be strong and fast enough to deal with threats and challenges.

Why this lack of greater multilateral activity in security affairs? The interests of the United States, its European allies, and its Asian partners are sufficiently alike to permit common action.

For example, all have a shared interest in maintaining stability, preserving access to critical resources, and controlling proliferation. Where they differ is in how they pursue these interests. The Cold War's heritage resulted in a pattern whereby the Europeans and Asians mostly focused on their local security needs, and the United States accepted the lion's share of responsibility for security missions elsewhere. The only major exceptions were Britain and France, which themselves sharply contracted their force deployments outside Europe.

Today this pattern lingers and is reinforced by prevailing political priorities. European countries are principally preoccupied with unifying their continent and building the EU in ways that leave little energy for other distant priorities. In Asia, Japan is involved in Asia's economic affairs, but its history leaves it loathe to undertake wider security responsibilities, not only because of its own preferences, but also because other countries do not want it to play a bigger role.

Reinforcing this pattern are sometimes differing policies for handling regional security affairs. In the Persian Gulf, for example, U.S. policy has called for defending oilfields while carrying out dual containment of Iraq and Iran. This policy has produced an emphasis on becoming capable of rapidly deploying large military forces to the region and on using them to handle periodic crises. Although Britain has commonly backed U.S. efforts, other European countries often have been more prone to use diplomacy, unaccompanied by the use of force. The result has been differences of opinion over how to handle rogues, differences reinforced by disparities not only in political judgments but also in military capabilities. Until these differing strategic perspectives are better harmonized, and similar military capabilities are acquired, the capacity for multilateral action will be limited to grave crises like the Gulf War, when a major threat creates compelling reasons for a big Western coalition to form.

## U.S. Interests

Market democracy's spread serves the interests of the United States, the democratic core, and the international community. The more it spreads, the more these interests are served. Yet, strong U.S. and allied foreign policies will be

needed if these democratizing trends are to be encouraged and channeled in the right directions.

## No Decrease in Security Requirements

Democracy's spread does not greatly reduce U.S. security requirements in the new era. Obviously the democratic core's health contributes to the greater sense of optimism in U.S. global strategy than in the Cold War. Keeping this healthy situation is a top strategic priority. Its loss would be an overwhelming strategic disaster for the United States as well as its allies. As history shows, even close allies can drift apart if they lose sight of each other's needs. They also must upgrade common interests, not just national interests. With care, the democratic core likely will remain intact. Its maintenance and effectiveness will greatly depend on dealing with other turbulent regions, not just protecting the inner core.

## Extension of Strategic Horizons

Democracy's spread into less-stable, more-turbulent regions also serves U.S. and Western interests, but emphasizes the need for strong Western policies. It validates democracy's future and enhances the prospects for greater regional stability. Yet, the proliferation of new democracies extends U.S. and Western interests into new areas of the world. The democratic core has powerful interests in protecting and encouraging these democracies.

The United States must now be concerned about, and involved with, more countries than before. This is already apparent in Eastern Europe, where the United States and its European allies are actively engaged in supporting democracy-building efforts. A similar prospect may exist in other regions as democracy spreads further. However, these regions are quite unstable. Although new democracies will have a calming effect, it will not fully stabilize them anytime soon. New democracies that pursue foreign policies focused on state interests may become part of the problem in the near-midterm. This situation makes strong U.S. and allied foreign policies even more important. It also may entangle them in a host of trouble-filled places.

## Staying the Course

The problems of new democracies are a looming setback to U.S. interests, at least in the short term. These countries are struggling to preside over major social and economic transformations, under difficult conditions that could result

**Cambodian pro-democracy demonstrators hold an American flag during a march in Phnom Penh**



AP/Wide World Photos

in their failing or at least not realizing their full potential. The world economy's downturn exacerbates their troubles. Also, some new democracies are showing signs of being democratic in name only, while carrying out illiberal domestic and foreign policies.

Such trends do not serve U.S. or Western interests. This especially is the case in such important countries as Russia, where democracy is endangered. These negative trends may subside in the long term, but this is not assured. In the near term, they emphasize the importance of discriminating and effective U.S. policies toward critical countries. The United States does not have the resources to shore up democracies everywhere, but it does have a compelling interest in shoring them up where their success has important strategic implications.

Although key countries are encountering serious problems, the United States and its allies should not diminish support for their democratization. Abandoning them would damage their efforts more than the current setbacks they are experiencing. The solution is not less support for democratization but the kind of support that is responsive and effective in the current situation.

## Developing New Allies

The spread of democracy enhances prospects for stability and cooperation. New market democracies can produce common values on which to build international cooperation. Recent experience shows that in the near term, new democracies do not necessarily produce close allies for the United States. This reflects their own lingering perceptions of themselves or of the United States.

In areas where market democracy is spreading, some countries are motivated not only by their own interests, but also by suspicion of the United States and its alliance network. The United States is paying an unavoidable price for its role as the world's only superpower. Irrespective of how it acts, its policies generate controversy. It often is criticized for being a hegemonic bully, but when it shows restraint, it is criticized for acting weak. In some countries, an underlying resentment exists regarding the wealth and allegedly materialist values of the United States and its allies.

Consequently, some new democracies will choose to keep their distance from the inner core not only out of their strategic views, but also because it is needed to maintain domestic credibility.

Democratization contributes to the number of potential U.S. partners. However, realizing this potential will be a long-term enterprise that will develop as confidence builds. In the near term, support for U.S. and Western policies likely will be stronger in some areas than others.

The democratic core's inability to pursue common policies in endangered regions is a serious liability for U.S. and allied interests. While the democratic core's potential strength is significant, it is inconsequential if it cannot be realized in dealing with global security and developmental problems. If new democracies could survive on their own and critical regions could stabilize themselves, the situation would not be as serious. But neither is the case. Progress will be achieved only if the democratic core acts strongly and effectively, especially in places of strategic importance.

The democratic core currently is experiencing a lack of willpower in some places, an absence of common goals and strategies, and inadequate military assets for power projection. These deficiencies can be remedied over time. Until this occurs, however, the United States and its principal democratic partners will lack the collective means to handle new era problems

under conditions that eventually could damage their own solidarity.

## Consequences for U.S. Policy

Promoting global democratization is a key goal of U.S. foreign policy and will remain so. Current U.S. strategy calls for strong efforts to help ensure that democracy is frequently adopted and accompanied by effective institutions and respect for human rights. The basic objectives of U.S. policy are not in question, but rather the actions and resources needed to achieve them.

The appeal of democracy offers the United States the opportunity to guide democratic enlargement to a successful outcome. However, this opportunity has its challenges. The United States must forge an effective strategy for democratization that is anchored in environment shaping, responds to crises, and prepares for an uncertain, demanding future. The task requires setting concrete goals that are visionary and realistic in balanced ways. It also means establishing clear priorities. Moreover, the United States must ensure that resources adequately support policies. The same applies to allies, whose actions will bear importantly on the outcome.

## Democratic Enlargement

Some form of democratic enlargement will remain embedded U.S. national security strategy. A few years ago, democratic enlargement was

**The Honduran legislature voted unanimously in 1999 to end 41 years of military autonomy and place the armed forces under civilian control**



AP/Wide World Photos

often seen as a dominant element. It was regarded as so important that it seemed to eclipse the other elements of global strategy for the future, including traditional diplomacy, military preparedness, alliance leadership, and crisis response.

This one-dimension calculus was overemphasized. Democratic enlargement is not proving to be as far reaching, as simple to achieve, or as peace enhancing as once hoped. Recently, it seems to be fading. The need for a more realistic emphasis does not mean its abandonment. Recent events do not call for democratic enlargement to be discarded, but for it to be placed in proper perspective regarding what it offers and how it can best be pursued. Democratic enlargement faces ample difficulties and shortcoming in the near term, but still has strategic potential in the long term.

The United States has an interest in retaining democratic enlargement as a key part of its strategy. The emerging situation suggests that democratization should not replace the traditional elements of strategy, but neither should it be overshadowed by them. Instead, it should complement these traditional elements, so that they reinforce each other in ways that better serve the national interest.

## Flexible Policies

Some years ago, democratic enlargement seemed simple and clear cut. Popular thinking held that democracy should be quickly and completely installed in key receptive countries. It further held that their economies should become market based and capitalistic through radical changes and shock therapy. This thinking concluded that diplomatic relations with them should be guided by the normal standards of cooperation and integration observed within the democratic core. Recent experience has dispelled this view.

The emerging situation calls for a more discriminating approach. It entails taking greater care in how democratic political institutions are created and how market economies and civil societies are reformed. A gradual, step-by-step process that has a powerful cumulative impact over several years may work better than a sweeping transformation implemented as fast as possible. How this should be carried out will vary with each country. Recent experience suggests that U.S. policy should focus on building the enduring foundations of democracy and constitutional law, rather than support for particular

personalities, radical economic reform agendas, and elections as the sole measure of progress. Each situation must be handled on its own merits, with flexibility being the watchword.

Even where the effort proves successful, recent experience suggests that U.S. policy should not necessarily expect new democracies to pursue foreign policies that reflect those of the inner core. The latter's multilateral cooperation and integration have emerged over a long period. They are also unique and unrepresentative of the world as a whole. Most new democracies arrive on the global scene in pursuit of their own interests, which are often defined in traditional terms and sometimes pursued in unsophisticated ways. These countries will help forge new international politics, but the initial consequences may not be uniformly stabilizing. These countries and the new international system will need to be treated in the context of determining how Western values and interests can best be served.

## Defense of Common Interests

Effective policies are needed for harnessing the democratic core's potential to defend common interests. They especially will be needed if the world becomes more turbulent and dangerous in the future. Emerging trends suggest that this goal should be elevated to a position of primary importance on U.S. and allied strategic agendas.

How can this goal be accomplished? How can fair burdensharing, effective common policies, and adequate combined capabilities be achieved? The task will not be easy, but NATO experience suggests that it can succeed. During the Cold War, NATO harnessed the potential of its members. NATO achieved this goal because transatlantic nations realized their interests could best be served through combined actions. Regardless of the approach, the United States must lead, but the allied countries have a reason to follow—their own interests are at stake.

An effective U.S. policy response must begin with mobilizing allied consensus regarding the fact that their interests are endangered. Such awareness exists in some quarters, but it is not yet widely discussed by many countries. As this goal is accomplished, a great deal of labor-intensive work can begin. Common military capabilities will need to be developed that ensure fair

burdensharing, sensible sharing of roles and missions, and operational effectiveness. Additionally, diplomatic goals and priorities should be harmonized to permit combined operations when the situation demands.

For the United States, this effort requires not only leading, but also sharing authority when responsibility is shared. For the allies, this effort means sharing responsibility in a manner that justifies any claims on authority. If the coming challenges are to be mastered, they will require the same spirit of cooperation that existed during the Cold War. A coalition response is difficult to forge and sustain, but, a division of labor that overburdens some countries while others are unchallenged will not work.

## Net Assessment

Democratization should be kept in strategic perspective. This is a global phenomenon that will transpire over the long term, even though its short-term success is important in such places as Russia and other key countries. An appropriate U.S. policy response is needed, one that is realistic, yet idealistic, and above all, effective.

The past two decades have produced significant increases in the number of market democracies. The rate of expansion could slow in the coming years. The number of additional democracies may not be large. A few more may be added to the democratic community, but some may drop out. A question is whether existing new democracies will take the steps needed to fully institutionalize democracy. Because many countries have only a few democratic features, such as elections without constitutions and laws, their future will be shaped by whether they can carry out the demanding task of democracy building.

Further democratization will not necessarily produce more allies of the United States seeking integration into the Western security-economic system. Some may decide to join, but others may remain on the periphery. Still others may either keep their distance or outwardly oppose U.S. policies. Regardless, most new democracies will have one thing in common: their foreign policies will be determined more by local interests than by larger strategic affairs. Small and medium powers will have a regional focus at best. The sheer sizes of big countries like Russia, India, and China require them to think in broader geographic terms. Yet, their foreign policies are also likely to be determined more by their pragmatic interests than by whether they practice democracy in their internal affairs. As for today's



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**Defying the ban on supporting opposition Culture and Democracy Party in Algiers**

rogues, democratization does not promise to reform their foreign policies for the simple reason that they appear to be among the least likely candidates to become democracies.

Democratization significantly affects the internal affairs of many countries, but it is unlikely to alter international affairs overnight in fundamental ways. Over the long term, however, democratization can be expected to temper foreign policies as new democracies mature.

Gradually, the scope for international cooperation and integration should expand. This development will serve U.S. and Western interests in important ways.

The United States should not expect miracles from democratization. It should be realistic about the troubles ahead and the constraints on further rapid progress. It still has reason to believe that investments in political reform will pay some dividends in the near term and major ones in the long term. This justifies staying the course in patient ways, even if it sometimes seems long, rocky, and frustrating. In the interim, the main challenge will be working with the existing, well-established democracies to enhance their capacity for combined action in the face of serious international troubles that are likely ahead. This venture will largely determine how the future unfolds.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Freedom in the World*, using a weighting based on political rights and civil liberties, identifies 81 of the 117 electoral democracies as free, 36 as partly free. Among the latter group several are making progress toward greater freedom. *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties, 1997-1998* (Washington: Freedom House Survey Team Staff, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).